



United States Department of Agriculture

Louisiana Conservation Update

August 2015

Farming by Technology



Soils Support Health

A cooperative partnership with local
Soil and Water Conservation Districts and
Resource Conservation and Development Councils (RC&D)

Projects • Successes • Partnerships



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On the Cover



Donavon Taves is taking technology on his farm to new heights. To learn more about how he is using technology to farm more efficiently, see pages 4 and 5.



 Follow us on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/user/LouisianaNRCS>

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Notes from the State Conservationist

Technological advances are made every day in every aspect of our lives. Sometimes I am truly amazed at how much technology touches our lives, especially in agriculture. Since the days of the Dust Bowl in the 1930s, we have seen agriculture take tremendous leaps in technology. Equipment is no longer pulled by horses or mules and planting is no longer done by hand. Today's farmers are using tractors that have GPS guidance to keep their rows straight, and reduce pesticide over-spraying, and planters have sensors that automatically adjust downward pressure place and cover seeds at the desired depth across the field. Even our increased productivity per acre across all of our crops is directly related the advances in technology. We continue to meet the food and fiber demands of a growing world population through a "some or all of the above approach" to agriculture technology.



In this month's issue of the Louisiana Conservation Update, you will meet East Carroll Parish farmer Donavon Taves who uses leading edge technology in almost every aspect of his farming operation. Mr. Taves invests time and money on technology that helps him farm more efficiently. Through the years he has worked with NRCS to integrate innovative conservation technology complimentary to other on-farm investments to benefit of his farm and natural resources. In a previous edition, we highlighted Mr. Taves venture into micro-irrigation technology as a water conservation and production optimization tool. Once again, he is sharing other new and innovation uses of available technology on his family farm.

NRCS recently released new technology, the Conservation Client Gateway, that provides many of our customers an alternative way to conduct their conservation and financial business. The current version of Client Gateway allows individual customers to interact through electronic communication with their field office personnel on conservation plans, program applications and contract information. This new technology provides our customers with a way to save time, money and fuel with fewer trips to the local office. NRCS will still provide the same face-to-face service as always; however, customers now have another option to work with us. We expect this service to be available to customers using business IDs in the next few months.

Contact your local office for more information on the Conservation Client Gateway, as well as the technical and financial assistance we provide.

Kevin D. Norton
State Conservationist

East Carroll Parish Ag Facts



There are 227 farms in East Carroll Parish
251,024 acres of land is in farms
85.4% is in cropland and 9.5% is in forestland
Soybeans are the #1 commodity of the parish

From: www.agcensus.usda.gov



“In my 22 years of farming, I have seen many technological advances to farm more efficiently.”

“If I had to relocate to another country and start over, the one piece of technology that I would want to take with me would be GPS guidance for my planter,” said Taves.

With more recent technological advances, Taves’ planter has the ability to sense how soft or hard the ground is and the pressure necessary to plant the seed adjusts accordingly, saving him both time and money.

Once his crop starts growing, Taves has drones that he flies over the crops, photographing them from above, which helps him know the overall health of his crop. He can load the pictures into farm software and get a prescription of the nutrients needed to improve the overall health of the crops. Combining all of this technology saves time and money spent on fuel and chemicals and precious resources like water.

Taves said, “I see great potential in using this technology, especially on pastures”.

One of his more recent drone purchases is a ground rover, which looks like a remote control car but is so much more. This rover can be driven down the rows of corn looking for weeds and can actually spot spray as it goes. He also has

Technology has become increasingly important in our everyday lives. People are using apps on smart phones to shop, get directions, monitor home security cameras and much more. Drones are not only being used by the military, but also to cover the news, put out wildfires and even in agriculture.

East Carroll Parish farmer Donavon Taves is taking technology to new heights on his operation.

Taves farms 2,750 acres of row crops, predominantly in a corn and soybean rotation. Fourteen years ago, Taves invested in GPS guidance for his planter - the first of many technological advances he has since purchased for his farm.

Farming by Technology

"I have always looked for technological
solutions recently." Donavon Taves

virtual reality goggles that when used in conjunction with the camera allows him to see his crops just like he is looking through the windshield of the rover.

Technology is also in place at his irrigation wells notifying him by e-mail if something shuts down accidentally. He has sensors in his fields that resemble typical soil moisture probes that alert him when irrigation water has reached the bottom of a field. In addition, he has the ability to start and stop his pumps remotely.

Once his crops are harvested, the grain is stored in bins on his property. These bins are equipped with a cable system that allows him to monitor moisture content and temperature from his phone, keeping his grain properly conditioned.

Taves has always been a progressive farmer. In addition to all of the technology he uses to farm, he also

works with NRCS to install innovative conservation technology on his farm. Taves has participated in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Wetlands Reserve Program, Conservation Stewardship Program, Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, and the Mississippi River Basin Initiative.

Taves is a board member on the East Carroll Soil and Water Conservation District, a certified Louisiana Master Farmer, and was recently named a Soil Health Ambassador by the National Association of Conservation Districts.

"It is important to me that I farm my land in a way that anyone looking at my farm can feel good about my practices and know that I am not only farming to benefit my best interests, but in everyone's best interests health wise by maintaining a safe food supply," said Taves.





2015
International
Year of Soils

Soils Support Health

Submitted by: Chis Coreil, Agronomist, Alexandria SO

A healthy soil is critical to supporting health in humans. First and foremost, soil is responsible for food production. Nearly all of the food we eat is derived, in some way, from soil. Soil provides nutrients, water, stability, and a buffered growth medium for our food-producing crops. We, in turn, can acquire carbohydrates, proteins, fats, and other nutrients from what we harvest and eat. A healthy soil is not only more productive, but food grown on nutrient rich soils have been shown to

produce food that is more nutritionally complete. Soil provides many more benefits that directly impacts our health, however.

Healthy soils are home to an extremely diverse microbial population. This richness in diversity helps to keep microbes harmful to humans, such as Clostridium tetani (tetanus) and Bacillus anthracis (anthrax), in check. Microorganisms do this through predation, altering their environment, and by releasing compounds called antimicrobial agents. Scientists have recognized the importance of these compounds for decades. They continue to study soil in the hopes of isolating new antibiotic compounds.

Because of scientists like Alexander Fleming, who is credited with discovering penicillin, minor injuries will seldom become life-threatening.

A healthy, diverse soil ecosystem is also capable of holding and utilizing toxic substances as a food source. During this process, harmful chemicals may be converted into harmless compounds. In this way, a healthy soil functions like a 'bioreactor'. This function is especially important in assuring pesticides and petrochemicals do not persist in the environment and harm us.

Remember, a healthy soil equals a healthy body.

StrikeForce Initiative



Louisiana Update

for Rural Growth and Opportunity

USDA Conservation & Soil Health Field Day

The Campti Field Of Dreams held an USDA Conservation & Soil Health Field Day on July 27, 2015, in Campti, Louisiana.



Attendees gathered at the Campti Historic Museum to learn more about soil management, conservation measures, crops and grazing forage.

Presenters from NRCS and FSA also discussed financial and technical assistance offered by their respective agency.

The group then departed to the Campti Field of Dreams Sustainable Agriculture

Demonstration Farm. Attendees toured the recently cleared area and learned about future plans for the farm.

Afterwards, NRCS personnel showed the group the importance of soil health using the rainfall simulator.



The BIG EVENT

Trailblazer RC&D hosted the 3rd BIG EVENT on August 15, 2015, in cooperation with Grambling State University (GSU), USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA Farm Services Agency and USDA Rural Development.

Dr. Willie Larkin, GSU's new president, opened the event by welcoming participants from communities throughout north Louisiana.

Each of the three agencies made presentations about the programs and services offered. As a result, USDA received 17 requests for assistance, of which 16 are first-time USDA participants.



Louisiana Armed Forces Foundation

As part of the StrikeForce Initiative in Louisiana, NRCS has entered into an agreement with the Louisiana Armed Forces Foundation, which will allow the Foundation to provide assistance to NRCS in promoting participation in USDA programs by military veterans in the state.

Around the State

PATHWAYS Student Summer Employment

This summer, NRCS in Louisiana hired eight college students to work in offices throughout the state. These students were able to work with district conservationists, soil conservationists, soil conservation technicians, and technical specialists to gain valuable experience with our agency.



On August 6th, the students gathered in Alexandria and gave presentations to the State Leadership Team about their experiences this summer in Louisiana working for NRCS as well as their favorite day.

NRCS will advertise for PATHWAYS student summer 2016 employment this fall at www.usajobs.gov/StudentsAndGrads.

Homegrown by Heroes Program

During the 3rd Annual Food 2 Table International Conference that was held in New Orleans, Louisiana, on August 8 - 10, 2015, Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry (LDAF) Commissioner Mike Strain unveiled the "Homegrown by Heroes" program, a farmer-veteran branding program that highlights military service while also promoting agriculture.

This is a national program that helps consumers identify products that are locally grown by a veteran. Louisiana is the 6th state to adopt the program. LDAF is partnering with the Farmer Vet Coalition on the program in Louisiana.



Upcoming Events

September 24, 2015 Feral Hog Workshop

Saline SWCD will be hosting a Feral Hog Workshop at the Bienville Parish Courthouse Annex in Ringgold, Louisiana at 5:30 PM on September 24, 2015. Call 318-894-2174 ext. 2 to register or for more information.

September 26, 2015 National Hunting and Fishing Day

Visit the NRCS tent during the National Hunting and Fishing Day event at LDWF Woodworth Outdoor Education Center in Woodworth, Louisiana, on September 26, 2015, from 9:00 am - 3:00 pm.

October 14, 2015 CWPPRA 25th Anniversary Celebration

The CWPPRA Task Force will be hosting a 25th Anniversary Celebration/Dedication Ceremony at 10:00 am on October 14, 2015, in Grand Isle, Louisiana. For more information or to register to attend this event, please contact Nikki Cavalier at 337-266-8626 or by e-mail at ncavalier@usgs.gov.

CONSERVATION CLIENT GATEWAY
CONSERVATION ASSISTANCE JUST A CLICK AWAY

- 1 REQUEST TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
- 2 APPLY FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
- 3 REVIEW, SIGN & SUBMIT APPLICATIONS, CONTRACTS & MORE
- 4 TRACK YOUR PAYMENTS

Sign up today for the Client Gateway!

Visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/clientgateway for step-by-step instructions. If you need additional help, personal assistance is available at (970) 372-4200.

Contact your local office for more information on this new way to work with NRCS.



United States Department of Agriculture

Contact Our Offices

Visit our web site at:
www.la.nrcs.usda.gov

Parish	Field Office	Soil and Water Conservation District	Address	Telephone
Acadia	Crowley	Acadia SWCD	157 Cherokee Drive, Suite C, Crowley, LA 70526	(337) 783-5823, ext. 3
Allen	Oberlin	Allen SWCD	309 North 1st Street, Suite 1, Oberlin, LA 70655	(337) 639-4850, ext. 3
Ascension	Donaldsonville	Lower Delta SWCD and New River SWCD	2259 Business Park Boulevard, Donaldsonville, LA 70346	(225) 473-7638, ext. 3
Assumption	Donaldsonville	Lower Delta SWCD	2259 Business Park Boulevard, Donaldsonville, LA 70346	(225) 473-7638, ext. 3
Avoyelles	Marksville	Avoyelles SWCD	629 Tunica Drive West, Marksville, LA 71351	(318) 253-9445, ext. 3
Beauregard	DeRidder	Calcasieu SWCD	597 Mahlon Street, Suite B, DeRidder, LA 70634	(337) 463-8555, ext. 3
Bienville	Minden	Saline SWCD	216B Broadway, Minden, LA 71055	(318) 377-3950, ext. 3
Bossier	Benton	Bodcau SWCD	200 Burt Boulevard, Suite 101, Benton, LA 71006-4901	(318) 965-2185, ext. 3
Caddo	Shreveport	Caddo SWCD	1402 Hawn Avenue, Shreveport, LA 71107	(318) 676-3461, ext. 3
Calcasieu	Lake Charles	Gulf Coast SWCD	5417 Gerstner Memorial Drive, Lake Charles, LA 70601	(337) 474-1583, ext. 3
Caldwell	Columbia	Boeuf and Dugdemona SWCD	7128 Highway 165 South, Suite 2, Columbia, LA 71418	(318) 649-2651, ext. 3
Cameron	Lake Charles	Gulf Coast SWCD	5417 Gerstner Memorial Drive, Lake Charles, LA 70601	(337) 474-1583, ext. 3
Catahoula	Jonesville	Catahoula SWCD	3545 4th Street, Jonesville, LA 71343	(318) 339-4239, ext. 3
Claiborne	Minden	D'Arbonne SWCD	216B Broadway, Minden, LA 71055	(318) 377-3950, ext. 3
Concordia	Ferriday	Tensas-Concordia SWCD	8331 Highway 84, Ferriday, LA 71334	(318) 757-2455, ext. 3
DeSoto	Mansfield	DeSoto SWCD	332 Lake Road, Mansfield, LA 71052	(318) 872-4949, ext. 3
East Baton Rouge	Denham Springs	Capital SWCD	907 Florida Boulevard, SW, Denham Springs, LA 70726	(225) 665-4253, ext. 3
East Carroll	Lake Providence	East Carroll SWCD	406 Lake Street, Suite C, Lake Providence, LA 71254	(318) 559-2604, ext. 3
East Feliciana	Clinton	Feliciana SWCD	9752 Plank Road South, Clinton, LA 70722	(225) 683-5496, ext. 3
Evangeline	Ville Platte	Evangeline SWCD	205 Court Street, Ville Platte, LA 70586	(337) 363-6602, ext. 3
Franklin	Winnsboro	Northeast SWCD	616 Riser Road, Winnsboro, LA 71295	(318) 435-6743, ext. 3
Grant	Colfax	Grant SWCD	510 Main Street, Colfax, LA 71417	(318) 627-9903, ext. 3
Iberia	New Iberia	Iberia SWCD	2617 Northside Road, Suite 600, New Iberia, LA 70563	(337) 369-6623, ext. 3
Iberville	Addis	Lower Delta SWCD	7747 Highway 1 South, Addis, LA 70710	(225) 687-2184, ext. 3
Jackson	Ruston	Dugdemona SWCD	1412 Celebrity Drive, Ruston, LA 71270	(318) 255-3136, ext. 3
Jefferson	New Orleans	Crescent SWCD	1041 Rue La Cannes, Luling, LA 70070	(985) 331-9084
Jefferson Davis	Jennings	Jefferson Davis SWCD	2003 Port Drive, Jennings, LA 70546	(337) 824-0975, ext. 3
Lafayette	Lafayette	Lafayette SWCD	905 Jefferson Street, Suite 310, Lafayette, LA 70501-7913	(337) 262-6601, ext. 3
Lafourche	Thibodaux	Lafourche-Terrebonne SWCD	143 Laura Drive, Thibodaux, LA 70301	(985) 447-3871, ext. 3
LaSalle	Jonesville	LaSalle SWCD	3545 4th Street, Jonesville, LA 71343	(318) 339-4239, ext. 3
Lincoln	Ruston	D'Arbonne SWCD	1412 Celebrity Drive, Ruston, LA 71270	(318) 255-3136, ext. 3
Livingston	Denham Springs	Capital SWCD	907 Florida Boulevard, SW, Denham Springs, LA 70726	(225) 665-4253, ext. 3
Madison	Tallulah	Madison SWCD	1900 Crothers Drive, Tallulah, LA 71282	(318) 574-4158, ext. 3
Morehouse	Bastrop	Morehouse SWCD	9604 Marlatt Street, Bastrop, LA 71220	(318) 283-7626, ext. 3
Natchitoches	Natchitoches	Natchitoches SWCD	6949 Louisiana Highway 1 Bypass, Natchitoches, LA 71457	(318) 357-8366, ext. 3
Orleans	New Orleans	Crescent SWCD	1041 Rue La Cannes, Luling, LA 70070	(985) 331-9084
Quachita	Monroe	D'Arbonne/Boeuf River SWCD	2410 Old Sterling Road, Suite B, Monroe, LA 71203-2668	(318) 343-4467, ext. 3
Plaquemines	New Orleans	Plaquemines SWCD	1041 Rue La Cannes, Luling, LA 70070	(985) 331-9084
Pointe Coupee	New Roads	Upper Delta SWCD	180 East Main Street, New Roads, LA 70760	(225) 638-7746, ext. 3
Rapides	Alexandria	Rapides SWCD	3734 Government Street, Building C, Alexandria, LA 71303	(318) 473-7856, ext. 3
Red River	Coushatta	Red River SWCD	1311 Ringgold Avenue, Coushatta, LA 71019	(318) 932-4352, ext. 3
Richland	Rayville	Boeuf River SWCD	141 Industrial Loop, Rayville, LA 71269	(318) 728-4451, ext. 3
Sabine	Many	Sabine SWCD	570 Highway 171 By Pass, Many, LA 71449	(318) 256-3491
St. Bernard	New Orleans	Crescent SWCD	1041 Rue La Cannes, Luling, LA 70070	(985) 331-9084
St. Charles	New Orleans	Crescent SWCD	1041 Rue La Cannes, Luling, LA 70070	(985) 331-9084
St. Helena	Amite	Tangipahoa-St. Helena SWCD	805 West Oak Street, Suite 1, Amite, LA 70422-2820	(985) 748-8751, ext. 3
St. James	Donaldsonville	Lower Delta SWCD and New River SWCD	2259 Business Park Boulevard, Donaldsonville, LA 70346	(225) 473-7638, ext. 3
St. John	New Orleans	Crescent SWCD	1041 Rue La Cannes, Luling, LA 70070	(985) 331-9084
St. Landry	Opelousas	St. Landry SWCD	5832 I-49 North Service Road, Opelousas, LA 70570	(337) 942-2530, ext. 3
St. Martin	Lafayette	St. Martin SWCD	905 Jefferson Street, Suite 310, Lafayette, LA 70501-7913	(337) 262-6601, ext. 3
St. Mary	Franklin	St. Mary SWCD	500 Main Street, Franklin, LA 70538	(337) 828-1461, ext. 3
St. Tammany	Franklinton	Bogue Chitto-Pearl River SWCD	1111 Washington Street, Franklinton, LA 70438	(985) 839-5688, ext. 3
Tangipahoa	Amite	Tangipahoa-St. Helena SWCD	805 West Oak Street, Suite 1, Amite, LA 70422-2820	(985) 748-8751, ext. 3
Tensas	St. Joseph	Tensas-Concordia SWCD	1223 Plank Road, St. Joseph, LA 71366	(318) 766-3502, ext. 3
Terrebonne	Thibodaux	Lafourche-Terrebonne SWCD	143 Laura Drive, Thibodaux, LA 70301	(985) 447-3871, ext. 3
Union	Farmerville	D'Arbonne SWCD	501 Glory Road, Farmerville, LA 71241	(318) 368-8021
Vermilion	Abbeville	Vermilion SWCD	3221 Veterans Memorial Drive, Suite H, Abbeville, LA 70510	(337) 893-5664, ext. 3
Vernon	Leesville	Calcasieu SWCD	205 North 5th Street, Leesville, LA 71446	(337) 239-2193
Washington	Franklinton	Bogue Chitto-Pearl River SWCD	1111 Washington Street, Franklinton, LA 70438	(985) 839-5688, ext. 3
Webster	Minden	Dorcheat SWCD	216B Broadway, Minden, LA 71055	(318) 377-3950, ext. 3
West Baton Rouge	Addis	Upper Delta SWCD	7747 Highway 1, South, Addis, LA 70710	(225) 687-2184, ext. 3
West Carroll	Oak Grove	West Carroll SWCD	208 South Constitution Street, Oak Grove, LA 71263	(318) 428-9303, ext. 3
West Feliciana	Clinton	Feliciana SWCD	9752 Plank Road South, Clinton, LA 70722	(225) 683-5496, ext. 3
Winn	Natchitoches	Dugdemona SWCD	6949 Louisiana Highway 1 Bypass, Natchitoches, LA 71457	(318) 357-8366, ext. 3

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